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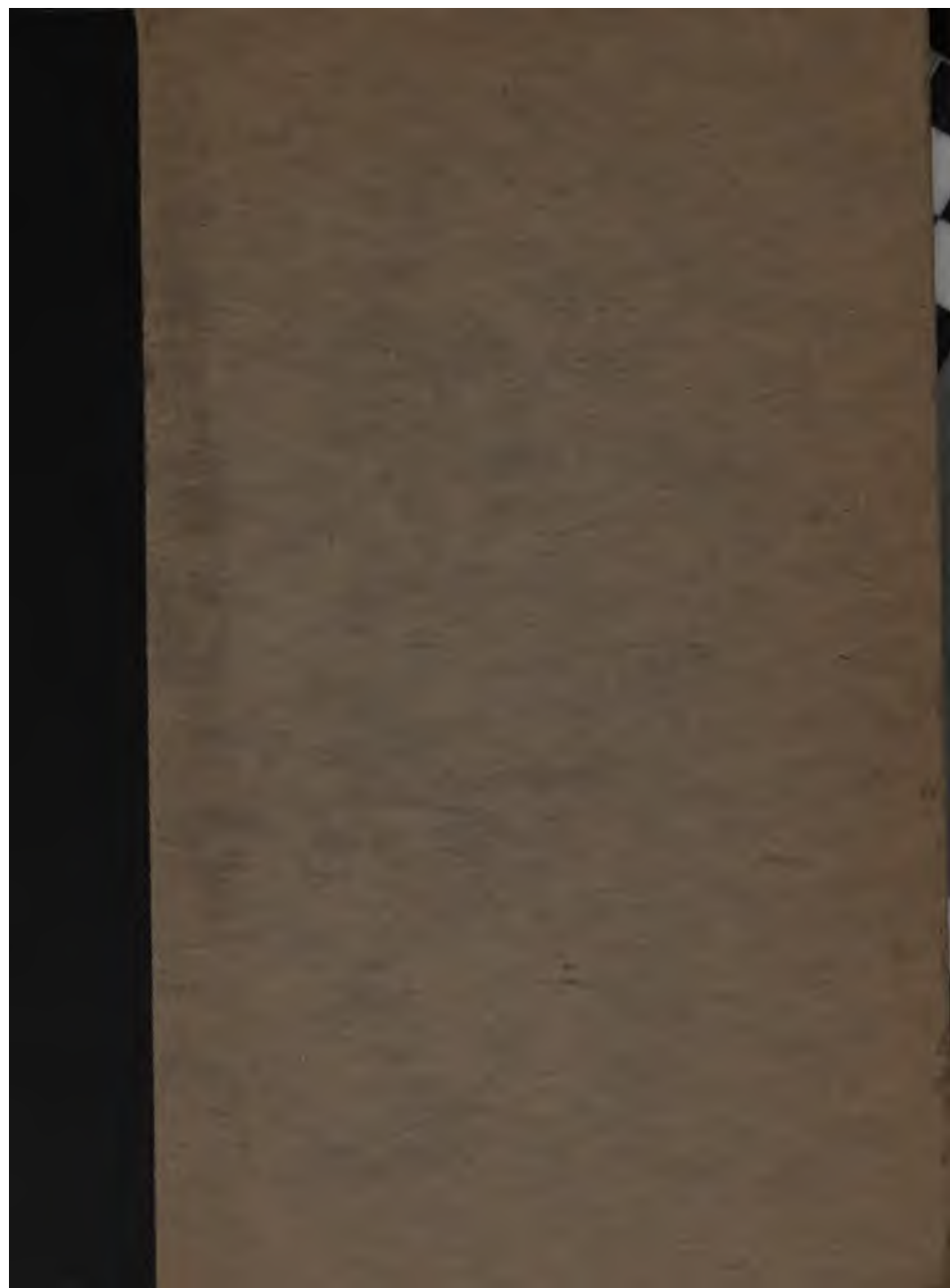
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Alfred I. B.

A

WESTERN JOURNEY

WITH

MR. EMERSON



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NOTE.

IN the spring of 1871 I was a member of a party of twelve, including Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who went by railroad from Boston to California, and travelled there for several weeks. This little book presents some notes of that journey. I kept no diary; but in writing to a member of my family who was a cousin of Mr. Emerson, I was led to speak of him often. What follows was prepared afterwards to be read to a club; and now, for one reason and another, I have come to think it well to print it.

And yet it is almost too slight a performance ; the pudding is small, and the plums are few. The reader will perhaps share my regret that I did not make some more careful and set attempt to preserve an account of what Mr. Emerson said and did, and that I have no record whatever of the homeward journey. But it would not have seemed quite friendly, in such a company, to play the part of a mere Boswell ; nor should I have been willing to tamper with my own quiet enjoyment of the situation by doing that. It will be remembered, also, that some things which really were preserved must naturally be omitted here, as being of too personal a nature for publication.

These savings from oblivion, then, are

to be regarded as a sort of *wreccum maris*,
— to use our pleasant law-Latin, — some-
thing not nearly so good as one could wish,
but better than nothing.

JAMES BRADLEY THAYER.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,

May 25, 1884.







A WESTERN JOURNEY WITH MR. EMERSON.

I.

OUR pleasant travelling party was gathered by a friend whose name, honored and beloved, I must not mention. From Chicago to San Francisco and back we were his guests, travelling in comfort, and even in luxury, in a private Pullman car, the "Huron." From Boston to Chicago the party found its way piecemeal; indeed, some of the company only joined us at Burlington, on the Mississippi. I was among those who left Boston with Mr.

Emerson on Tuesday afternoon, the eleventh of April, 1871. At noon of the twelfth we crossed the bridge at Niagara, and on the morning of the thirteenth we were at Chicago, where we passed a day and night. On the fourteenth we entered the comfortable and well-stored car that was to be our inn for the whole of the next week.

Pullman himself saw us off at Chicago: a man something over forty years old, as I guessed; rather short, with a beard and close-cut grayish hair; quiet and modest in manner, — a little heavy, perhaps, and slow, as he appeared that morning, — and yet his words went farther than his manner led one to expect. "The car," he quietly remarked to Mr. Emerson, "was strong, and would bear rolling over and over. There was, however, one place where, if we were to go off, it would not hold to-

gether; that was just as we should go down the Sierra Nevada, at rounding Cape Horn; at that point it was some hundreds of feet straight down, and he would n't warrant it there. The car and the outfit," he added, "was the best that he could do. He had submitted his bill of fare to our host, who had told him that the party would probably be strong on fruit, but not so strong on wine. We could have as good a dinner as we could get at Parker's if we would only order it,—he would warrant *that*."

We only went that day as far as Burlington, where we passed the night with cordial friends; some of these crossed the State with us, on the next day, to the Missouri River at Council Bluffs. On Sunday, the sixteenth, having, meantime, passed our first night in the car, and then having crossed the river into Nebraska

at Omaha, we were attached to the regular train of the Union Pacific Railroad, which started at noon.

We were now not quite midway between the two oceans,—about fifteen hundred miles from Boston, and nearly two thousand miles from San Francisco. The way would now lie, for about five hundred miles, along an open, slightly rising country to Cheyenne, in the Territory of Wyoming, where we should arrive at about Monday noon; then, suddenly, up a quick ascent of a few hours to Sherman, in the Rocky Mountains, more than eight thousand feet above the sea,—the highest point in the whole journey. By that time we should have passed something more than a third of the distance from Omaha to the Pacific. Then we should traverse a vast upland region,—always at a great height, sometimes seven thousand feet

above the sea, and never lower than thirty-nine hundred feet, through more than fifteen degrees of longitude,—across Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada, to “Summit,” in California, at the top of the Sierra Nevada. With us, this was to be a four days’ journey; for meantime we should make a *détour* of twenty-four hours to Salt Lake City. On leaving “Summit,” at the western limit of the great table-land, a thousand feet lower than Sherman, we were to drop quickly from this great height in a few hours; a hundred miles would bring us down to Sacramento, which is little more than fifty feet above the sea. Then, finally, from Sacramento, a hundred and fifty miles more would carry us over the lovely Coast Range Mountains, and down again to San Francisco. By the end of the afternoon of the twenty-first of April we should find ourselves

once more at the sea-level which we had left, ten days before, at Boston.¹

Little happened on the way to Chicago ; but we had already begun, even in the public cars, to have the queer pleasure that one feels at sitting over his dinner, in leisurely conversation with a friend, while the train is speeding on like mad. Mr. Emerson had brought along his purple satchel, with a book or two. He had with

¹ "The great tangle of mountains which makes up the western third of our territory" is designated by Professor J. D. Whitney, the learned and accomplished State Geologist of California, as the "Cordilleras," limiting this word to North America, and the word "Andes" to the corresponding region in South America. In his admirable "Yosemite Guide Book" (fourth edition, 1874),—the merits of which are very imperfectly indicated by its title,—he says, at p. 53: "The Sierra Nevada, or Snowy Range, forms the western edge of the great continental upheaval, or plateau, on which the Cordilleras are built up. It corresponds in position to the Rocky Mountains; the one being the western, the other the eastern, edge of the central portion of the

him, also, the manuscript sheets of his "Parnassus," on which he worked more or less with his daughter. This kept his mind a good deal on the poets, and he talked of them as we raced through the State of New York. "'Faust' was a destructive poem: it lacked affirmation; he did not like it. The second part was only a sketch. But his knowledge of this was only partial." Something was said of im-

mass. The base of the Rocky Mountains, however, is four thousand feet above the sea-level, and the slope from it eastward is almost imperceptible, but continuous for six hundred miles to the Mississippi; while from the crest of the Sierra Nevada we descend rapidly, in less than a hundred miles, to very near the level of the sea. The plateau between the two ranges is nearly a thousand miles wide, having here its greatest development and its maximum altitude; while the subordinate ranges piled upon it here exhibit their greatest regularity of trend and structure." The Salt Lake Valley is a little higher than the Yosemite, and the latter is four thousand feet above the sea.

agination and fancy, and of the old discriminations between them. There was a copy of Wordsworth at hand, and reference was made to one of the prefaces, where it is said of comparisons formed by the imagination, that "a sense of the truth of the likeness, from the moment that it is perceived, grows and continues to grow upon the mind." "Yes," he said, "imagination is the solemn act of the soul in believing that things have a spiritual significance. It uses words simply as a vehicle for conveying that." William Morris was mentioned; he liked his poems, but "deplored the quantity that he writes."

As we crossed Illinois, in the long, delightful leisure of our first day in the "Huron," Mr. Emerson began by pulling out of his satchel a little German dictionary and a small volume that Mr. George Bancroft had sent him as a New Year's

present, Goethe's "Sprüche in Prosa" (Berlin: Von Loeper, 1870). "He found it an excellent time to study his German, in the cars." He turned over the leaves of his book and read aloud some sentences from it; among them was Donatus's *Percant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt*. "Of Donatus," he said, "he had first heard from Landor, who quoted from him poetry of Julius Cæsar." And then he settled down and went on with his studies; but not long. He quietly began to talk again; and something brought up Swedenborg: "Swedenborg was like Linnæus, or those who devised the nomenclature of chemistry,—a sort of classifier of souls." But he praised him, and advised me to read "Arcana." "The 'Conjugal Love' is good also; but 'conjugal' was such a silly word." Mention was made of F. W., and of the excellent promise that he and

some others of the younger clergy gave. "The minister," said he, "is in no danger of losing his position; he represents the moral sense and the humanities." He spoke of his own reasons for leaving the pulpit, and added that "some one had lately come to him whose conscience troubled him about retaining the name of Christian; he had replied that he himself had no difficulty about it. When he was called a Platonist, or a Christian, or a Republican, he welcomed it. It did not bind him to what he did not like. What is the use of going about and setting up a flag of negation?"

At Council Bluffs we were switched off upon a side track, where we passed the Saturday night. In the morning I was on at five o'clock to explore the town. I grew accustomed to a long morning and a late breakfast; when the same room

serves for bed room and breakfast room, one must wait till the last person is up. And then cooking for a family, in the little three-foot kitchen that such a car can have, is a slow business ; dishes have to be prepared separately, and then set to wait till others are done in succession. But as to my own early morning hours, I was happy, for Mr. Emerson also was an early riser, and I often met him at the washbowl. It was so on this still, bright Sunday morning at the western edge of Iowa. We walked up into the town. He talked of Froude, and of a plan that he should come here to lecture. He had known him formerly with Clough and Stanley, and had just been writing to England about him. And then he mentioned Henry VIII and Shakspeare's play, and "wished he could know about that play, it is so unlike the others in its versification." He spoke of

Miss Mary Rotch, of New Bedford, a Quaker, for whom he had a great respect. "He had supplied Dr. Dewey's pulpit at New Bedford once, and knew her well. She was a thoughtful person, who saw everybody's limitations in matters of religion; a very noble person, who held to that sense of what she should do, to which the consent of the whole world could not give authority, nor its opposition diminish it. One would say to her, 'Well, Aunt Mary' (everybody called her 'Aunt Mary'), 'what is this "light" that you speak of?' 'It is not a thing,' she would reply, 'to be talked about.'"

The train of the Union Pacific Railroad was to begin its journey at Omaha, on the other side of the river, and our car was carried over in a boat.

From Council Bluffs we looked down over four miles of meadow, or "bottom,"

stretching away towards the town of Omaha, that lay scattered loosely over the beautiful easterly slopes of another great bluff, like that where we stood. The river was well over towards the western side. When we reached it, late in the forenoon, we found it running furiously, — deep, raging, tawny, full of mud ; on the other side were shallows ; on ours the steamboat came close up to the bank, and the water was cutting fast into the fine prairie earth, so that it was dangerous to go near the edge. The little wooden railroad offices were moved back from day to day as their footing was in danger of being undermined, and were mounted accordingly on rollers. The building of a bridge had been already begun, and the sinking of the iron supports, out in the river, down to the solid rock through sixty and eighty feet of sand and earth, was then going on.

It was more than two days from Omaha to Salt Lake City. When we had left Omaha, we came soon to a sort of country very different from the rich prairies of Iowa, — a treeless, shrubless, flat region of red earth, with some starveling grass and weeds ; “ this poor, flat, worn-out common,” was Mr. Emerson’s name for it. This was the fiftieth year since his graduation at Harvard, and his Class was to have a celebration. He spoke with great respect of his classmate, Mr. Francis Lowell, of Waltham : “ Mr. Lowell had said to him that he did not think he had ever expressed to another more feeling about him than he really had.” I referred to another of his classmates, and asked if he had read a certain book of his. “ No,” he said, laughing ; “ he never reads my books. I don’t know why I should read his.” Of a certain stout friend he said :

"P., a prudent, staid man, took him up when young, and sent him abroad. When, years afterwards, his young friend returned, it was a wonder how P. could get on with this lively person, all outside and nothing inside, — this disjointed, mindless sort of person." He repeated Tennyson's lines about the eagle : —

"He clasps the crag with hookèd hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls."

He admired it. But there should be some hint, he thought, of the fish or the prey upon which the bird is pouncing. He referred to the lines in "In Memoriam" beginning, —

"Calm and still light on yon great plain," —
as a wonder for their compactness. He



had lost sight of Keats's sonnet about Chapman's "Homer," and some one tried to repeat it to him. It was gradually picked out, but it took till the next morning to bring back the erroneous "Cortez" and his staring at the Pacific. It was a peculiar pleasure, afterwards, when we, too, had come to the Pacific, to go with Mr. Emerson and verify the lines in the Public Library at San Francisco.

In climbing the Rocky Mountains to Sherman, on the seventeenth, we had the comfort of seeing a few trees. Then we crossed the high grazing country of the Laramie Plains, and saw antelopes, like small deer, that scampered swiftly away, shaking their white tails. No buffaloes were seen in all the journey. The plains were covered with a low, dusty, aromatic shrub, the wild sage. In the night we passed the "divide,"—at a lower point,

however, than Sherman,—and flew through a country covered with snow. This was the alkali region; we had already reached this tract as the night came on, and felt, or seemed to feel, in the air a faint suggestion of potash or saleratus; but by and by the dust ceased, and snow covered the plain.

Mr. Emerson had been dining that day with one of the ladies, and told her a large story about an acquaintance of his son, in California, who had a vineyard, and who at last fell, so it was said, off a bridge into the water, and was eaten by an alligator! “Nowadays,” he added, “one must finish off a story well. Perhaps this might not be exact.” “But yet observe,” said his companion, willing to vindicate the accuracy of the tale, “the man had a vineyard, and the alligator did n’t eat that!” This suggestion was tendered with an

appearance of candor that took Mr. Emerson's breath away for a minute ; but he recovered, laughed, and with a nod, slowly and dubiously remarked: "Yes, that deserves to be considered. But it is, perhaps, not conclusive!"

On the next day, the eighteenth, we were coming down towards Ogden in the Salt Lake Valley, — descending some twenty-six hundred feet, through a series of magnificent cañons. We all stood on the platform, and slighted dinner. At first we looked curiously at the rocks along the road. On the left the mountains sloped up, covered with the gray-green sage-bush. On the right they became abrupt walls and buttresses of gravelly rock. Soon the gorge grew impressive, from the narrowness of it, and from the vast height of the steep walls, and the inexpressible beauty of great towering

peaks, covered with snow, that rose high about us. At last, when every variety seemed to have been exhausted, we were suddenly silenced and stunned by a succession of high, magnificent isolated buttresses of red rock, curiously rounded and, as it were, carved. And then came another cañon, and another. At last we slid swiftly out, near Ogden, into the vast, fat plains of the Salt Lake region, where cherries and peaches were in blossom, and men were ploughing.

Here we separated our car from the Pacific train, and turned south. Through this magnificent valley, after leaving Ogden, we ran to Salt Lake City and stayed there—living in our car,—till the next day at noon.





II.

WE arrived at Salt Lake City in the early evening. Bills of a performance at the theatre that night had been distributed on the train ; it was to be "Marriage by Moonlight ; or, the Wild-Cat's Revenge," with the introduction upon the stage, it was added, of "a real pile-driver." Seven of us, including Mr. Emerson, went at once to see this. The interest of the play culminated when the hero, being drunk, had been placed by some other ruffians with his head under the "real pile-driver." The weight was to descend at the last stroke of seven ; six of the strokes had passed, when the heroine, the "Wild-Cat,"

bounded forth and rescued the gentleman. The thin audience appeared to us a melancholy company.

The next morning I was out early. Rain and snow had fallen in the night, and covered the black paste of their prairie soil with a shallow slosh. I picked my way along the sidewalk to the open meadow. The sky was gray and clouds lay on the beautiful mountains that overhang the town to the north and east; away off to the west and south, snowy mountain ranges were shining in the sun. Brooks ran gurgling along each sidewalk; it was pretty to hear them in the dark as we went to the theatre the night before. All this water had been led in from the mountains by the Mormons. Already the little channels of the brooks were bordered with tender grass, and the trees that were planted everywhere along the two sides of

the roads sucked in vigor from the water at their roots. There are no trees on the mountains, and in all the enormous spaces within eyeshot none are seen except these along the streets and in the gardens of the town. And these have all been planted by the Mormons since they came here in 1847.

I soon reached the edge of the meadow, and came upon a young fellow standing near his little adobe house, who had just shot at some ducks. We fell into a talk. He was nephew to W., a high Mormon, whose name I recognized, and he had lived with his uncle's family. It consisted of the uncle's six wives and twenty-five children,—"a small family," he added; "some have forty and fifty children, and even more. They live very pleasantly," he said; "each wife has a separate establishment,—a separate kitchen, and other

apartments,—and each looks after her own children.” His uncle he pronounced to be “one of the best men on this earth.” “The President” (so they all designated Brigham Young), “to the best of his knowledge, had sixteen wives ; he knew these, and they were fine, lady-like women.” As to the number of Young’s children he could not say. My own information, from other sources, gave Young all the way from thirty-two children to sixty or seventy. The young man was a good-looking fellow ; “not exactly a Mormon,” was his phrase, but evidently he was no opposer of them. “The Gentiles,” he said, “get on very well here if they mind their own business ; as they generally do,—excepting some of the scum that have come in here, who want to interfere with everything.” By this time we had grown cool in the damp air, and easily fell apart.

I returned to the station, where our car was, and found the platform in charge of a stubbed, gray-haired old Englishman, of straightforward qualities. He was a Mormon, but had only one wife. He had lived at East Boston once, and had preached Mormonism in Boston fifteen years ago. I asked him to preach now to me, and to tell me why one should be a Mormon. "Well," he said, "they believed in the Bible, and held that there were prophets and apostles now. No one need practise polygamy unless he liked. They held to it because it was the usage of Abraham, and Isaac, and Moses, and the rest ; it was in order to raise up a righteous seed to God, and to obey the command to Adam, to multiply and replenish the earth." The old fellow seemed serious and well-meaning. And indeed all through this town, even in the shops, one found in the people a

certain flavor of religion, — a subdued and virtuous air, as of those who felt themselves to be own brothers to the early Christians.

In the forenoon most of the men of our party called upon Brigham Young; the ladies declined, with thanks. Young's carriage was waiting for him at the door, but a card was sent in, and we were admitted. "The President" soon entered the room arrayed for his drive, his long cloak on, and his hat in hand. He was a man of not over medium height, full-blooded, and with the look of some stout stage-driver who had prospered and been used to authority. His face was smooth, except for whiskers of a reddish cast touched with gray. His hair, rather thin and of a like color, seemed wet, and was parted behind and brushed or rather rolled up on the top, in a cheap way that one might see on a teamster at

a ball, or on a teamster's child that had just left the hands of its mother. He shook hands all round with a stolid sort of dignity, and sat down. His mouth was close, his nose somewhat aquiline, his eye quiet but cunning, his manner good, and steady. A little talk sprang up, — not without its difficulties. Some one spoke to Young of what we had liked about his town, and said that he had had an excellent opportunity to show what combined labor could do, and the directing power of a single man; and he unluckily used the phrase, "the one-man power." "Yes," said Young, quickly, "the one-man power! It's easy to talk about that! We have no more of it than they have elsewhere!" Alas, we had not begun well.¹

¹ We found afterwards that he had lately preached a sermon, printed that very day, in which he had touched upon the "one-man power." "Is it our abil-

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But this was smoothed over, and we tried again. Much excitement was existing just then about newly discovered mines in Utah. He intimated that he cared little about them, and did not expect much from them. Mr. Emerson asked him what books there were from which one could get a correct impression of their opinions. He said, shortly: "There were none. They did n't print anything." But his secretary,

ity," he said, "that has accomplished what we see here in building up a colony in the wilderness? Is it the doings of man? No. To be sure, we assist in it, and we do as we are directed. But God is our captain; he is our master. He is the '*one man*' that we serve. . . . What do you suppose I think when I hear people say, 'Oh, see what the Mormons have done in the mountains. It is Brigham Young. What a head he has got! What power he has got! How well he controls the people!' The people are ignorant of our true character. It is the Lord that has done this. It is not any one man or set of men; only as we are led and guided by the Spirit of truth."

a thin, pallid young man, intervened, and suggested to Young that there *was* a book, "Answers to Questions." "Yes," Young replied, "that was good ; as good as anything." He gave no sign of knowing who Mr. Emerson was ; but the secretary soon turned to one of us, and with a motion towards Mr. Emerson, inquired, in a public way: "Is this the justly celebrated Ralph Waldo Emerson?" and then to Mr. Emerson: "I have read a great many of your books." We were then desired to enter our names in a register, and so took our leave.

We afterwards found a copy of "The Deseret News" of that same day, April 19, containing Young's sermon to which I referred before.¹ It was a strange dis-

¹ The following are extracts from the sermon: "Now, gamblers, stop your gambling here, and go to work; that is my advice. 'Well but,' say some, 'we

course, — patriarchal, giving much homely good advice, marked by quaint sense, and yet flavored also with a revolting mixture of religious fanaticism and vulgar dishonesty. Mr. Emerson was a good deal interested by a certain power in the address, and a certain homespun sense.

are not going to be instructed by Brigham Young.' Who cares for that? If you will not receive my instructions, instruct yourselves. I want you to see, in and of yourselves, that your life is a poor miserable life of waste, a disgrace to the human family. Go to work; improve the country, build towns and cities, set out shade-trees, build school-houses and meeting-houses, and worship what you please, we do not care what. Be civil, honest in your deals, be upright, do not take that which belongs to your neighbor; and miners, do not go to law, and lawyers, go to work."

"Who put flour into the barrels here when we were destitute and had nothing to eat? The women would go and scrape the precious barrel, and take out the last half-ounce of meal, and make up a little cake to divide among the children; and perhaps the next time they would go to the barrel they would find it half

We left Salt Lake City in the afternoon, returned to Ogden, and started westward again at once. It was still nearly nine hundred miles to San Francisco, and we should reach it in two days. At sunset we were scudding along close by the Great Salt Lake. The northern edge of its large expanse (it is about a hundred and twenty six miles long), lay right under the car

full of flour. Who put it in? Their neighbors? No; they had none to put in. Was it from the States? If it was, they who brought it must have flown through the air, for they could not have brought it with ox-teams quite so quickly . . . I know now, and knew then, that these elements that we live in are full of all that we produce from the earth, air, and water. I told the people when we settled here that . . . all we had to do was to go to work and organize the elements. How far Jesus went to get the wine that was put into the pots which we read about in the account of the marriage of Cana in Galilee, I do not know; but I know that he had power to call the elements that enter into the grape into those pots of water, unperceived by anybody in the room."

windows ; ducks in profusion were flying and settling on the water, purple mountains were in the distance, and behind these the sun was setting in majesty. Presently we were running along under a snow-covered range of mountains ; and the soft tints and changes of light on these engaged every one's attention. And then it was over. Mr. Emerson had dropped his writing to see it all, and now turned to one of the ladies : " Well, what are you going to *do* about this,—all this beauty ? " She answered : " You say somewhere that it is better to die for beauty than to live for bread." At which he murmured a little, good-naturedly, and was silent. Then he began to talk of the Mormons. Some one said, " They impress the common people, through their imagination, by Bible names and imagery." " Yes," he said ; " it is an after-clap of Puritanism. But one would

think that after this Father Abraham could go no further."

We woke on the twentieth in Nevada, in a desolate, barren country; a few stunted cedars were about us, and the everlasting sage-bush, growing in tufts over the plains; and snowy mountains lay, on both sides, along the not-distant horizon. At a little watering-station it was delightful, in the early morning, to step out into the stillness and the clear, invigorating air. Pools of water were just skimmed with ice; the sun was shining, and a single meadow-lark was singing its pretty note. Two or three Chinamen — laborers, probably, upon the railroad — were standing near a little hut close by, and a white dog was jumping and playing about them; the language of good-will, at any rate, was understood between them. During the day we saw many Indians, — short and dirty

creatures, — Utes and Shoshones. Their wigwams of skin, all smoky at the open top, were visible here and there on the plains. These squalid people stood about at the stations, idly looking on, or asking money and food; some were in blankets, red or gray; some had their faces stained with red earth, all over or in stripes. The boys put the paint on thickest. The women had brass rings on their wrists, — sometimes a dozen on each. At one station Chinamen stood watching the Indians; we remarked a resemblance between them, especially in the high cheekbones; but their eyes were different. And then the Indians, although destitute of beards, had hair that was like horsehair, — heavy, long, coarse, black, lying thick above their low foreheads and hanging about their heads, and held in their teeth sometimes to keep it still.

We passed on this day through the cañons of the Humboldt River, — torn, jagged, barren rocks and cliffs, that looked as if wasted by a hundred centuries of lightning and storm; then through an alkaline region, where the surface of the ground was white like a city street that has been watered with salt water; but the alkali was thicker. "This all reminds me," said Mr. Emerson, "of the Bible and of Asia." In the afternoon we were still running through this level alkali-country in Nevada. There were no trees; nothing but the sage-bush, and a prickly shrub, and a sort of Scotch broom. Steam was rising here and there away off, showing where a hot-spring lay; and snow-covered mountains, in the distance, rested against a blue sky which was tender and misty in the horizontal air. By evening we had entered on what is called the Great

Nevada Desert ; and now were troubled by the alkali dust until sleep came.

On Friday morning, April 21, we waked in California, among the tops of the Sierra Nevada. Snow was all about us, and great pine-forests ; it was good for New England eyes to see trees once more. Presently we began to go through lines of snow-sheds, like a covered bridge ; and then it was time to be up. There was still a long, long stretch of sheds ; in all, so the guide-book told us, there were over forty miles of them. At last we came out of the sheds ; and instead of snow, found grass and green trees, and, at a stopping place, heard robins and picked flowers. At seven o'clock they put on an observation-car, — much like an open street-car. Into that we all got ; and for twenty miles and over, to Colfax, where the train stops for breakfast, we passed wonderful things.

The air was soft and spring-like, and the sun struck down into the great gorges through the trees below us, drenching the tree-tops with light, and throwing their soft and misty shadows below. Finally came what they call "rounding Cape Horn," of which Pullman had told us,—where the train is carried by a road cut into the mountain, along the side of it, away up near its top. You look straight down off the car a depth of fourteen hundred feet, a fearful distance, into the valley of the American River. But what a pretty sight it was! At the bottom, right under us, was set a little plain,—smooth, grass-covered, with peach-trees in blossom, and purple flowers, and the ground fairly gilded in spots with yellow flowers. We passed swiftly on, and left it all; and one recalled Mr. Emerson's own lines on such transitory glories, where he speaks, in the "Threnody," of what

“rainbows show and sunsets teach ;” we could not detain it. After this there was a general falling back, as if we had done enough for the present, and we sat down gladly to breakfast. When the train stopped at Colfax, we found ourselves in the midst of June ; trees and roses were in blossom, the grass was waving, the vegetables were all up in the gardens, and every one was happy in the mere delight of living. I kept silently quoting to myself : “In this refulgent summer, it is a luxury to draw the breath of life.” I will say no more of the quite inexpressible happiness of that forenoon in which we came down the mountain. I stood upon the rear platform alone with Mr. Emerson. He said nothing, except now and then a mere utterance of delight ; and it was the only time in the whole journey when one would have hated to have the silence broken, even by him.

We arrived at San Francisco by the end of the afternoon, and went to the Occidental Hotel.

I came out of my room the next morning at about eight o'clock, and met Mr. Emerson in the passage-way. As we were going downstairs, Dr. Horatio Stebbins, the distinguished successor to Starr King in the Unitarian pulpit of San Francisco, met us with a cordial welcome. He wished Mr. Emerson to promise at once to speak at his church the next night ; this was readily agreed to. He also wished to drive Mr. Emerson and any two others of the party that forenoon out to the Cliff House, on the sea-shore, some seven miles away. At breakfast came other invitations. Word came that Mr. Ralston had placed a saddle-horse at Mr. ——'s disposal, and wished the party to dine with him some day. Another

gentleman called, and desired us all to save him two days to visit a Spanish ranch ; and there were several other calls. We had been telegraphed, as indeed passengers were regularly telegraphed, from Ogden.

I made the third that morning, with Mr. Emerson and his daughter, in driving with Dr. Stebbins. We passed through the Chinese quarter, and out over beautiful grassy hills, covered with blue and yellow lupine and a hundred delightful flowers ; and soon we, too, "stared at the Pacific." Mr. Emerson was delighted as we drove along the beach of the great new ocean. We sat long on the platform of the Cliff House, and rested, and watched the sea-lions that climbed and played on some rocks a short way out in the ocean, and at the birds that settled by hundreds on the same rocks. The sea-lions looked like common seals (but much larger) as they

crawled up out of the sea and played with each other, or tumbled back again, or lay flat in the sun, or raised their heads and threw back their necks, and wagged them about, smooth and shiny, with the movement and general aspect of a leech. We returned, and dined at six. Mr. Emerson was in excellent spirits, and laughed as he told of one of the young ladies having weighed with him at the station in Cheyenne, and weighed *more* than he did; "but he meant to gain something." "Yes," said she, "but I shall gain too." "No," he answered, "your habits are the same as before; but mine have all gone to pieces out here!" Then he turned to me: "How much did I weigh? A hundred and forty?" "A hundred and forty and a half," was the answer. "Yes, yes; a hundred and forty and a half! That *half* I prize; it's an indication of better things!"

1871
The next evening, Sunday, the twenty-third, Mr. Emerson read his address on "Immortality" at Dr. Stebbins's church. It was the first time that he had spoken on the Western coast; never did he speak better. It was, in the main, the same noble essay that has since been printed. At breakfast the next morning we had the newspaper, the "Alta California." It gave a meagre outline of the address, but praised it warmly, and closed with the following observations: "All left the church feeling that an elegant tribute had been paid to the creative genius of the Great First Cause, and that a masterly use of the English language had contributed to that end." Mr. Emerson took his full share of enjoyment in this passage, and laughed with that quiet ground-swell of a laugh that his friends remember. There was another visit that day with Mr. Emerson to the sea-beach,

and a survey that night of the Chinese quarter,—of their theatre and gambling-houses, opium-dens, restaurants, and Joss-houses; and, later on, there were visits to the cellars of the great wine manufactories, and other places. The Chinese opium-dens were fearful things. "There is not much aspiration there,—or inspiration," said Mr. Emerson, as our party came out; and he expressed his wonder at the strange way in which our civilization seemed to fail to take hold of these people, and at their persistence in herding and huddling together, when there was such vast room all about them.

We called one day on some friends who showed Mr. Emerson certain works of art; among them were three valuable paintings asserted to be originals,—two Cimabues and a Giotto. "They are," said Mr. Emerson, as we came away, "*vastly* old; and

the Giotto goes to justify the remark of Vasari, that this painter had improved art by putting more goodness into his faces." Miss —, a Concord girl whom he knew, a famous skater, was now in San Francisco, performing in public as "The Skatorial Queen." Mr. Emerson had sent her a ticket for one of his lectures,—for he had by this time engaged for a short course of lectures. "She had sent him one," he said, "for her entertainment, and had kindly said that if he came late she would with pleasure repeat her skating. As their performances heretofore had been on the same night, they had not yet been able to see each other; but he meant to see her yet." We met a man one day who showed us a well-rubbed horse-chestnut which he carried in his pocket as a preventive against rheumatism; and Mr. Emerson told us of his friend A., who once

produced his horse-chestnut with the remark that it worked well; he had never had the rheumatism since he began to carry it; "and indeed," added A., "it appears to have had a retrospective operation; for I never had it before!"

On the twenty-seventh Mr. Emerson and two or three others of our party went by water to Vallejo, and by rail along the lovely Napa Valley to Calistoga. Others of the party had already gone forward to the same point. Most of us went on from Calistoga to the Geysers; but Mr. Emerson was bound by lecture engagements, and he and one or two others returned in a leisurely way through the Sonoma Valley to the city.





III.

ON the second of May we started for the Yosemite Valley, — all but one of the younger ladies. The journey took three days and a half: first, a forenoon eastward in the cars; then, still eastward, two days in large, four-horse, covered wagons, open at the sides; and then two long half-days on horseback. On the way out it was my good fortune to be in the same wagon with Mr. Emerson. His talk was mainly with the three others, who were the older members of the party. I was on the front seat with the driver; but the seats were all on a level, and there was no parti-

tion ; and I could hear without the responsibility of conversation, and was at leisure to watch the novel and engaging sights through which we were passing. We drove over a level and dusty prairie, the great valley of the San Joaquin, — what they call, up in the mountains, the “Great Sand Plains.” The wheat which had struggled to cover the plains (there was no grass in all the immense expanse) was sadly stunted, and already, even so early in the season, it was drying up. Little ground-squirrels in profusion scampered about us all the way, and suddenly whisked into their holes ; while small owls sat gravely at the opening of these same holes, and as we drew near dropped quietly down into them, or flew away. These last were a dapper, gray little gentry, with wings that closed in front like a Quaker’s shad-belly coat. There were magpies also, with long tails ; and

there were small blackbirds, with yellow breasts and heads, that flew along in front of us in successive shoals, and alighted on the fence; and then flew on, and again alighted; and at last darted off into the fields. Big gray hares, with long and wide ears, which stood permanently up and stuck forward, ran all about; "jackass-rabbits" they called them, and called them well.

As we went on, it was hard to get water for the horses. We found a well, however, at one place, — eighty feet to the water; it was not stoned, and a broad platform at the top alone saved one from his fears of a caving in. Then we came in sight of the Tuolumne River,¹ on the banks of which, farther up, we were to lodge for the night. A pretty sight it was, as we looked across its narrow green meadow, sunk below the level of the plain, — with oak-trees here

¹ Pronounced *Too-ollumy*.

and there, and fields of thriving wheat and of barley and oats mixed and growing together for fodder. The sun behind us was sinking, and its light streamed across the meadow and kindled its bright, refreshing green. We heard here the meadow-lark of California, whose sweet, plaintive note is like that of the wood-thrush.

At last we drew near Roberts's Ferry, and had accomplished twenty-three miles. A team of twelve mules was coming in at the same time, dragging two wagons hitched together and loaded with merchandise for the upper country, — chests of tea, scythe-handles, crockery, chairs, and the like. There was little at the ferry but Roberts's own houses and barns. He was a Boston boy; but his wife was from the West, and she gave us quantities of liver and pork to eat, and hot saleratus biscuits. But we had also native wine, fresh from the press,

which was really nice. A single Chinaman of most unregenerate manners slopped about in our service. Some of us before dinner went to the river, and the younger men went in to bathe; but they came out quicker than they went in, for it was cold and swift, and of a chocolate color,—stained with red earth from the placer-mining in the mountains. The miners keep Sunday,—so Roberts told us; and on Monday mornings the river certifies their virtue, and runs clear.

It had been a tropical day. We sat in the evening on the uncovered platform that ran about the house, and the air was dry and soft. Some one spoke of going to bed. "To me," said Mr. Emerson, quietly and in a solid way, "*this* is delightful; I enjoy the passing hour." He had talked a good deal on the drive over, and some things I had caught. Some one

spoke of immortality, quoting an argument from science. "The soul," he replied, "has a hint quite independent of that. Why is this insatiable desire to know and learn? We feel that we should be in a manner wronged if there were nothing more. Goethe said that if he used all his powers, Nature was bound to give him another term. The soul feels that it is in communication with the source of things; and it knows." "The future has as much to offer us as the past has had; if we were not preached at so much we should easily let things pass, observe them, and say: 'We have seen the last of that.' In heaven I think we shall only be shown things once; in the best world they will have so much to show us that we can only see them once." "The soul deals with space as it does with time; when the spiritual life takes place, things are neither here nor

there." Some one spoke of E. H., and said that she seemed a very timid person. "Ah!" said he, "but she was one who had said to herself: 'Well, if the fire *should* burn me!'"¹

The twelve mules lay outside that night, hitched to the poles of their wagons; and it was like something in Chaucer to see them. Early in the morning we were off, and crossed the ferry. We were rising as we travelled, now; and soon we came to a rolling country, and then to the foot-hills, and at last, after forty miles, to Coulterville, which is fairly in the mountain region. Our companions, the little owls and squirrels and "jackass-rabbits," had attended us at first in full numbers;

¹ There is a difficulty in presenting such a remark on paper. The reader needs some hint of Mr. Emerson's look and accent to get his suggestion of a martyr's faith.

especially a quantity of squirrels, clawing along like mad, as we rumbled by, — just as if their predecessors had n't been doing the same thing all the afternoon before. We came to "Morley's Well," where there was a big trough and a sign-board, with this odd inscription: "Water for horses; none for old wagons." Morley himself stood leaning on his barn-yard fence as we came up, and — asked him what the sign meant. "Well," he answered, "sometimes a wagon comes along, and they want five pails of water just to wet the axle!"

Mr. Emerson had been sitting that day on the back seat, and I only half heard his talk. At Coulterville we found the hotel kept by a Mr. Clark, a Franklin-medal scholar from the Boston schools. He had been a sailor out of New Bedford; then a miner for many years; and now he was keeping a school here. He had temporarily

added hotel-keeping to his other duties, while the landlord was away for a little time. After tea I sat with Mr. Emerson in the warm, summer-like evening, and smoked and listened to the crickets. "When alone," he said, "he rarely cared to finish a whole cigar. But in company it was singular to see how different it was. To one who found it difficult to meet people, as he did, the effect of a cigar was agreeable; one who is smoking may be as silent as he likes, and yet be good company. And so Hawthorne used to say that he found it." On this journey Mr. Emerson generally smoked a single cigar after our mid-day dinner, or after tea, and occasionally after both. This was multiplying, several times over, anything that was usual with him at home.¹ There were only three of the

¹ Like Milton, Mr. Emerson "was extraordinary temperat in his Diet," and he used even less tobacco.

party who smoked at all. While we were on the car our retiring-room was the rear platform and a little back passage-way. There was no car behind us, and few things could be more delightful than these peaceful sessions, as we talked and looked out at the flying landscape.

On the next day, May 4, we were off again in our wagons by seven o'clock. We mounted now for twenty miles, through open groves of magnificent evergreens, to a height of sixty-five hundred feet above the sea; then, at Hazel Green, we left our wagons and travelled horseback through the same sort of forest, descending for the most part and occasionally passing patches of snow, until at night we came to Crane

Milton's quiet day seems to have closed regularly with a pipe; he "supped," we are told, "upon . . . some light thing; and after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water went to bed."

Flat,—the name of a settlement composed of the single shanty in which we were to lodge. The great feature of this day was the endless multitude of magnificent pines and firs and arbor-vitæ, which seemed to grow larger as we came on—four feet, six feet, and even eight or ten feet in diameter, and rising, straight as an arrow, for two hundred feet and more. The sugar-pines were the largest, with a rich light-brown bark, mottled and marked like alligator skin; their smooth stems had no branches for a great height.¹ Hardly

¹ "More and more of the sugar-pine is seen from about four thousand feet on to five thousand, at which altitude the last-named noble and peculiarly Californian tree is most abundant. The sugar-pine is remarkable for the size of its cones, which hang in bunches of two or more from the ends of the long branches, like ornamental tassels. . . . Its size [is] gigantic, being not unfrequently three hundred feet in height, and from seven to ten feet in diameter" (Professor Whitney's

smaller were the arbor-vitæ. Often the trees were covered with a light, green-gold moss that seemed to originate sunshine as you saw it in the hollows. As he looked at the stately evergreens along the gorges and hillsides of the forest, Mr. Emerson apostrophized them: "You *gentlemen* pines!" We passed a curious rock, shaped like a fungus; and he declared that "it had been a mushroom, and then was turned into a rock; perhaps because it smelt so. Some benevolent demigod, going by, might certainly do that for it!" We stopped for water at a little house, and found it occupied by a Mr. Dexter, from Bangor, in Maine. A Ute Indian man was washing the family clothes at a dollar a day. His tribe had once filled this region, and there was now a settlement

"Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, 1874, p. 59). At Lake Tahoe we found cones of the sugar-pine ranging from one foot to two feet in length.

of a hundred of them near by. Mr. Dexter told us that when one of their number dies, the others cover their faces with tar, and keep it on for two months, or until it wears off, — never washing them. They spend their money for whiskey and gaudy clothes.

Arrived at Crane Flat (a "flat" is a level place among the hills), we found indeed the half-built shanty, the "hotel," as they called it; but the lord and lady of it were away. Two men, however, remained in charge. Nothing was ready: no bedsteads were up; there were no knives, forks, spoons, or towels. Candles there were, and bedding, and bales of new blankets never opened; some provisions, too; and the cook (an old official from a Panama steamer) contrived to give us a good dinner, which we, somehow, even with few implements, were able to eat. The seventeen horses were hitched to a fallen tree for the night.

By a great roaring fire near by, some of the younger men made ready to camp, while the rest of us were to sleep on the floor within. It was a lovely evening; the moon was full, the air was cool, the great bonfire was blazing, and frogs were singing in full chorus in a pond in front. The pond, indeed, was bordered with snow; but the frogs already smelt the good season that was at hand. After dinner Mr. Emerson sat, with his shawl about him, sharing with W. and me our frugal puff of tobacco; "I find this," said he, "a singular comfort!" One of the ladies soon came up to speak with him, and we two withdrew to the kitchen and its blazing hearth, and lay down on the cook's bunk to finish our cigars. In a few minutes Mr. Emerson came in. "Ah," said he, as he spied us, "these are the only philosophers!" and he sat down and fell into a talk with the cook.

It rained furiously in the night, and drove the campers in. In the morning it was misty and cloudy, and we were kept from visiting a grove of redwoods near by. But it did not rain, and we accomplished the rest of the journey into the great valley—eighteen miles—in six hours and a half. Much of the way was through forests like those of the day before. “These trees,” said Mr. Emerson, “have a monstrous talent for being tall.” We saw little snow; but then we had departed from the regular trail to avoid it. Some who came through by that trail the same day wallowed in three feet of snow. We descended very gradually, until we reached the edge of a chasm, and then looked down through the mist into something that seemed like the White Mountain Notch, only the vast depth and the grandeur of the great iron-gray cliffs were more impressive.



IV.

THIS was the entrance to the Yosemite Valley.¹ Along a steep, winding

¹“The valley is a nearly level area, about six miles in length, and from half a mile to a mile in width, sunk almost a mile in perpendicular depth below the general level of the adjacent region. It may be roughly likened to a gigantic trough hollowed in the mountains, nearly at right angles to their regular trend. . . . At its lower end the valley contracts into a narrow gorge or cañon, with steeply inclined walls, and not having the U shape of the Yosemite, but the usual V form of Californian valleys. The principal features of the Yosemite, and those by which it is distinguished from all other known valleys, are, — first, the near approach to verticality of its walls; second, their great height, not only absolutely, but as compared with the width of the valley itself; and finally, the very small amount

path we now came suddenly down into the gorge, and reached, at the bottom, a narrow cañon and a clear, swift river; and then wound along among the rocks, and so came up the valley. The space soon began to widen into a grassy, bushy meadow thinly furnished, here and there, with oaks and maples and pines; sometimes the scanty grass gave place to mere sand and gravel. As we came farther up we passed the lovely fall of the Bridal Veil,¹ the Cathedral Rocks, the bold,

of *talus* or *débris* at the base of these gigantic cliffs" ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, pp. 84, 85). As regards the formation of the valley, Professor Whitney puts forward the theory of a sinking of the earth's crust at this point (*Ibid.*, p. 119).

¹ The names of these great objects are often pretty bad. "Some of them," says Professor Whitney . . . "slightly incline to sentimentality; for if we recognize the appropriateness of the 'Bridal Veil' as a designation for the fall called Póhono by the Indians, we fail to perceive why the 'Virgin's Tears' should be flowing

huge, towering cliff of El Capitan,¹ and then crossed the toll-bridge. The river was wild, swift, deep, clear as crystal; some seventy or eighty feet wide, as I guessed. The heights about us were very grand, and we presently caught a hint of the vast size of the hills, by observing the odd littleness of our companions and of the whole cavalcade; it was

on the opposite side of the valley" ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, p. 23).

¹ "El Capitan is an immense block of granite, projecting squarely out into the valley, and presenting an almost vertical sharp edge, three thousand three hundred feet in elevation. The sides or walls of the mass are bare, smooth, and entirely destitute of vegetation. It is almost impossible for the observer to comprehend the enormous dimensions of this rock, which in clear weather can be distinctly seen from the San Joaquin plains, at a distance of fifty or sixty miles. . . . It is doubtful if anywhere in the world there is presented so squarely cut, so lofty, and so imposing a face of rock" ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, p. 87).

constantly stealing over us, how small they looked.

There were at that time three taverns in the valley. We stopped at the first that we reached, — Leidig's, a neat and good one. It was very simple indeed in its arrangements,¹ but it was beautifully placed. We had come up the cañon and the valley some four or five miles, and were now near the foot of the Sentinel Rock, which shot up into the air for more than three thousand feet close behind our house.² A considerable brook, and yet but a thread of

¹ I was waked one morning by the cackling of a hen that was walking over my bed in search of a nest.

² "A slender mass of granite, having something the shape of an obelisk. . . . The obelisk form of the Sentinel continues down for a thousand feet or more from its summit; below that it is united with the wall of the valley. Its entire height above the river at its base is 3,043 feet" ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, p. 90).

water, as it seemed, was slipping down its side. To the right as we looked out of our front door, and due north of us, in full sight but a good way off, was the great Yosemite Fall, where a river comes pouring over the mountain. It drops for half a mile; but the fall is broken once, near two thirds of the way down. From where we stood, it was the beauty of the torrent that first drew attention, as it yielded to the wind and was blown aside. But its long, deliberate fall, and the distant roar of its dashing upon the rocks, made it also a grand and impressive object.¹ Here

¹ The word Yosemite is said to mean Grizzly Bear. It "was probably," says Whitney ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, p. 19), "the name of a chief of the tribe; or perhaps . . . the name given to the valley by the band of Indians driven out by the whites in 1851." "In the spring, when the snow first begins to melt with rapidity, the volume of water [in the Yosemite Fall] is very great; . . . still later, it shrinks

where we stood, at the bottom of the valley, we were four thousand feet above the

down to a very much smaller volume. We estimated the size of the stream at the summit of the fall, at a medium stage of water, to be twenty feet in width and two feet in average depth. Mr. J. F. Houghton measured the Yosemite Creek below the fall June 17, 1865, and found it to be thirty-seven feet wide and twenty-five inches deep. . . . At the highest stages of water there is probably three times as much as this. The vertical height of the lip of the fall above the valley is, in round numbers, twenty-six hundred feet. . . . There is first a vertical descent of fifteen hundred feet, when the water strikes on what seems a projecting ledge. . . . From here the water finds its way, in a series of cascades, down a descent equal to 626 feet perpendicular, and then gives one final plunge of about four hundred feet on to a low *talus* of rocks at the base of the precipice. . . . The descending mass of water is too great to allow of its being entirely broken up into spray; but it widens out very much towards the bottom,—probably to as much as three hundred feet, at high water, the space through which it moves being fully three times as wide” (“Yosemite Guide-Book,” fourth edition, pp. 90-92).

sea. The mountain walls along the six or eight miles of this noble gorge did not sink below a height of two thousand feet above the valley, and rose sometimes in peaks of three, four, and five thousand feet. From side to side, between the walls of rock, the distance might average a mile; it seemed much less. The stars were magnificent in the narrowed canopy overhead; beautiful was it in the evenings to see the planets touch the edge of the mountain opposite, and then slip, like melting silver, from our sight.

The day after our arrival we went on horseback, for about four miles up the valley, to the Mirror Lake and its great reflected mountain, the Half-Dome. We observed the odd work of the woodpeckers, where they had riddled the bark of the tall pine-trees with holes, as many and as regular as those in a lady's thimble,

and had stuffed an acorn in each hole.¹ As we rode along, Mr. Emerson talked with one of the young ladies, and recited Scott to her, and she to him. We were not quite early enough at the lake; a breeze had sprung up and ruffled it, so that we lost its wonderful reflections. But there was enough to keep us sitting long, to admire the pretty lake and to watch the noble mountain, lifting itself like an exhalation

¹ Mr. Emerson was very sceptical as to the story of the woodpeckers' putting in these acorns; he thought it more likely to be the work of squirrels. But I am told by a very learned friend that the woodpecker is the only creature that stores acorns in this way; and another very competent authority assures me that he has often seen the woodpeckers flying straight as an arrow at these holes, and thrusting the acorns in, and then driving them home with repeated tappings of their bill. The acorns are said to fatten a grub, for which the woodpeckers in due time return. Robins sang beautifully in the valley; but I do not recall the singing of any other bird there.

for nearly a mile into the sky. "This valley," said Mr. Emerson, as we sat there, "is the only place that comes up to the brag about it, and exceeds it."¹

¹ Of the Half-Dome Professor Whitney says: "A crest of granite rising to the height of 4,737 feet above the valley. . . . The only one of all the prominent points about the Yosemite which never has been, and perhaps never will be, trodden by human foot. . . . The whole appearance of the mass is that of an originally dome-shaped elevation, with an exceedingly steep curve, of which the western half has been split off and become engulfed. This geological theory of its formation appears to have forced itself upon those who gave it the name 'Half-Dome,' which is one that seems to suggest itself at the first sight of this truly marvellous crest of rock. . . . It has not the massiveness of El Capitan, but is more astonishing. . . . It is entirely unique in the Sierra Nevada, and, so far as we know, in the world. The only possible rival would be the Matterhorn. . . . But the forms of the two are so different that they will hardly bear comparison" ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, pp. 95-97). The Indian name of this mountain is Tesaiyak.

The next day several of us rode with Mr. Emerson up the valley and into the cañon of the Merced, some eight miles, to see the Vernal and the Nevada falls.¹

In the freshness of the morning we crossed a wide grassy meadow, and admired the magnificent array of mountains that made the valley walls about us, — the "Royal Arches," whose great curves de-

¹ The Indian name for the Vernal Fall is Peiwayak, — "White Water." "The Merced," says Whitney, "in coming down from the level of the plateau above . . . descends, in two miles, over two thousand feet, making, besides innumerable cascades, two grand falls, which are among the greater attractions of the Yosemite. . . . The first fall in ascending the cañon is the Vernal, a perpendicular sheet of water . . . probably at the average state of water, in June or July, four hundred feet. . . . The Nevada Fall is in every respect one of the grandest water-falls in the world. . . . To call the Vernal four hundred and the Nevada six hundred feet in round numbers will be near enough to the truth" ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, pp. 99, 100).

lighted Mr. Emerson ; the helmet-like North Dome above them ; and, opposite, resting against the sky, the great Half Dome, cleft straight down, as with an axe, like the eastern front of Gibraltar. We were fascinated in watching the little foaming streams that slid and fell along their sides ; sometimes they were dropping over a shelf of rock and dispersing in vapor, like a puff of frosty breath, before they found the earth ; or a broader sheet of water, like a great ribbon, would come falling down, and be blown off and scattered, — yet with a pretty wavering this way and that, while some of the delicate threads slowly held their way and descended upon the rock below.

At the Vernal Fall the river is some two rods wide, and pours over the rock in a noble mass. As we stood and looked silently at this thick, milk-white, exquisite fleece of

descending foam, some one repeated from the "Wreck of the Hesperus," —

"She struck where the white and fleecy waves
Looked soft as carded wool."

The phrase was singularly good for the object upon which our eyes were resting. Mr. Emerson gave a pleased nod, and desired it said over again; and then he wished a reference to it when we should get to the hotel. Had he then let Longfellow's poetry pass by him so much? He spoke of Longfellow repeatedly, and with friendly regard; but one could see that he was not particularly drawn to his verse.

It was a sharp climb on foot from the lower fall to the Nevada. We found here a little unpainted shanty ("La Casa Nevada"), kept by a Mr. Snow and his wife, from Vermont. The fall justified all our expectations. It presented the same appearance as the other, — that of a mass of foam;

but it was higher, and had some curious and beautiful characteristics. Half way down it meets with some obstruction, and a part of it shoots violently up again in a fountain, and forward in jets of foam. To see these darting rockets spring and shoot forward, and then curve and fall so swiftly, and yet seeming, in all the tumult, to melt into the air as they fall, recalled William Hunt's furious horses and their guide, in his picture of "The Queen of Night," where the wild flight is moderated into such an easy and secure grace.

We dined at the neat and wholesome little shed with the great title, and then sunned ourselves on the platform in perfect happiness and talked. The Italians were mentioned, and some one praised their character and their mixture of ardor with elevation of sentiment. Mr. Emerson doubted. Dante was cited. "Yes, oh yes, Dante!"

he answered, — as if he was exceptional, and not to be counted. Then some one named Michael Angelo, and Vittoria Colonna, and Tasso; and the modern Ruffini and his “Dr. Antonio.” “Yes,” Mr. Emerson seemed to allow it; but he liked better what he found among the English Puritans, and in Mrs. Hutchinson’s memoirs of the life of her husband. Then he recurred to the Italians, and talked of Manzoni, of Madame Arconati (Margaret Fuller’s friend),¹ and of Macchiavelli. “Macchiavelli,” he said, in his slow, pausing way, “wrote — like — the Devil; uttering his devilish sentiments with so much sweetness and coolness, — as if they were all summer air!”

Soon it was time to go home. We were

¹ It is stated in Colonel Higginson’s interesting *Life of Margaret Fuller* that Madame Arconati was by birth a Pole.

now fifteen hundred feet above the valley. Some of the young men insisted on climbing the Liberty Cap, — a peak that rose three thousand feet above our present place. Mr. Emerson begged them not to do it, but they would. "Why," said he, "will those madcap boys do that? What is the use of teasing the mind? It is only capable of a certain number of impressions." It was Sunday; and as we rode along home he said, with quiet happiness: "This we must call *the Lord's day*: we seldom read such leaves in the Bible."

On Monday, May 8, we went again in the morning to Mirror Lake; and now really saw the reflections. The sun was not yet risen over the Half-Dome. With our backs to the east, we looked down into the water, in depths that were not its own, and watched the top of the great mountain and the increasing light behind it, and then the

effulgence of the risen sun. The ride had been delightful. "One thinks here," said Mr. Emerson, as we came along, "of the Arab proverb: 'Allah does not count the days spent in the chase.'" He praised some one's rule: "Take notes on the spot; a note is worth a cartload of recollections." I observed that he himself occasionally practised this. He spoke too of Goethe's inscription for a tomb: "Think on living;" and of one of Goethe's maxims, — "the maxim," he said, as if not intending just then to indorse it, "of a literary man: 'Spend not a moment's time with people to whom you do not belong, and who do not belong to you.'" Something was said of the Venetian artists; and Mr. Emerson quoted Beckford, — "that fop Beckford," — where he says of Paul Veronese's "Marriage at Cana in Galilee:" "I never beheld so gorgeous a group of wedding-garments

before . . . The guests appear a very genteel, decent sort of people, well used to the mode of their time, and accustomed to miracles."¹

On the way home we rode to the foot of the great Yosemite Fall, and watched the water drop from its monstrous height. It seemed to be a river some thirty or forty feet wide. We went on, and stopped for a moment at Hutchings's Hotel ; Hutchings recognized Mr. Emerson, and asked him in, and entertained him with the native wine, and with accounts of the Digger Indians. They grind acorns, and make it into a mush or porridge for food, first prudently filtering it with water to get the tannin out.² This

¹ "Italy; with Sketches of Spain and Portugal" (London, 1834), i. 106.

² "The valley has been annually visited by the Monos, at the time of the ripening of the acorns, for the purpose of laying in a stock of this staple article of food." The Indian name of Cathedral Rock means a large

they season with dried grubs and the chrysalis of flies collected from the froth on certain ponds. Chance now and then throws some other delicacy in their way. One night while we were in the valley, a mule was drowned in trying to cross the too swift river (the owner was saving his toll at the bridge);¹ and on the next day we saw five Indians carrying off upon their backs the carved pieces of the poor creature for their food.

We came home; and after dinner sat on the shady side of the house, and talked at large. Mr. Emerson praised Fulke Greville, Sidney's friend. He spoke of

"cache," or stack, of acorns, "which the Indians are accustomed to build in the trees, in order to secure their stock of food from the depredations of wild animals" ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, pp. 18, 21).

¹ It was worth saving; we had been charged seventy-five cents apiece as we rode over the bridge on entering the valley.

Boccaccio and the Decameron: "What made the coarseness of the book endurable, aside from the purity and grace of it as language, was its being steeped in Italian life and manners." I made bold to ask him what he had in mind in naming his recent course of lectures at Cambridge, "The Natural History of the Intellect." This opened a very interesting conversation; but, alas! I could recall but little of it,—little more than the mere hintings of what he said. "He cared very little for metaphysics; to him —, [he named a well-known metaphysician] was a mere block. But he thought that as a man grows he observes certain facts about his own mind,—about memory, for example. These he had set down from time to time. As for making any methodical *history*, he did not undertake it." Then, unhappily, he was called off; but he soon came back, and

recurred to the matter. "Had I heard his lecture at San Francisco on 'Resources'? At the end of that he had crowded some things which he had said at Cambridge in a lecture on 'Inspiration.'" And then, going on with the explanation, he spoke of the difference in one's moods: "On one day a man is an angel in his ambition and his power; on the next he is a fool. One goes to bed at night not worth a sixpence, and rises a new man. Now it is the aim of prudent living to find the sources of this inspiration,—the *honest* sources of it; for one man seeks it in hashish, and so on. Well, sleep is one of these sources." And there was more; but I could not clearly bring it back. He said of Coleridge's "*Biographia Literaria*," that he did not see how a young scholar could do without it; and praised his definitions of Genius, Reason, Imagination, and Fancy, quoting,

as he went on, Wordsworth's "Light that never was on sea or land," and his famous lines, used more than once:¹ —

"The intellectual power, through words and things,
Went sounding on a dim and perilous way."

Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* "he did not so much value." He told also the story which I remembered hearing in his lecture on "Memory," about his going once to Charleston by water, and recalling, as he lay on his back, — "for I had a clear head," he significantly added, — every line but two or three, of the "Lycidas," "always a favorite poem;" and yet he had not known that he knew it. "What a range," he added, "memory gives to a man, — so small a creature!"

That evening (Monday) there came an admiring, enthusiastic letter for Mr. Emer-

¹ "The Excursion," book iii., and "The Borderers," act iv. scene ii.

son from M., a young man living in the valley, and tending a saw-mill there. He was a Scotchman by birth, who had come to this country at the age of eleven, and was a graduate at Madison University, in Wisconsin. Some friends near San Francisco had written him that Mr. Emerson was coming, and they had also told Mr. Emerson about him. He had read Mr. Emerson's books, but had never seen him, and wrote now with enthusiasm, wishing for an opportunity to come to him. The next morning Mr. Emerson asked my company on horseback for a visit to M. So he mounted his pied mustang, and we rode over, and found M. at the saw-mill alone. He was an interesting young fellow, of real intelligence and character, a botanist mainly, who, after studying a year or two at Madison, had "zigzagged his way," he said, "to the Gulf of Mexico, and at last

had found this valley, and had got entangled here, — in love with the mountains and flowers ; and he did n't know when he should get away." He had built the saw-mill for Hutchings, and was now working it. He had heretofore tended sheep at times, — even flocks of twenty-five hundred. Occasionally he rambled among the mountains, and camped out for months ; and he urged Mr. Emerson, with an amusing zeal, to stay and go off with him on such a trip. He lodged in the saw-mill, and we climbed a ladder to his room. Here he brought out a great many dried specimens of plants which he had collected, and hundreds of his own graceful pencil-sketches of the mountain peaks and forest trees, and gave us the botanical names, and talked of them with enthusiastic interest. All these treasures he poured out before Mr. Emerson, and begged him to accept them. But Mr.

Emerson declined ; wishing leave, however, to bring his friends to see them. Other calls were interchanged that day and the next ; and when we left, two days later, to see the great trees of the Mariposa grove, M. joined our horseback party.

Our last day in the valley brought to the party various occupations. We were to depart from the regular trail on the next day, turned aside by the snow and fallen trees ; and so we should miss that noble cliff, high up among the mountains, so meanly denominated "Inspiration Point." Some of us, therefore, took this time to go there ; Mr. Emerson was otherwise occupied. The last traveller that had been that way was probably the well-known Englishwoman, Mrs. Yelverton, who had gone on, late in the fall of 1870, and was lost in a snow-storm, and with difficulty rescued by Leidig, our landlord. We passed down

the south side of the river, close under the immense Cathedral Rocks and their two spires, and then under the lovely waterfall of the Bridal Veil, which the Indians prettily called Póhono.¹ In some respects this is the most beautiful object in all the valley. It drops, looking truly like a white veil, off a shelf of rock some nine hundred feet above you, and comes down touching nothing for over six hundred feet. It is really a large body of water, and it plunges with a great crash into the basin of rock below, and flows swiftly off in three or four considerable streams, which at this time of the year were deep brooks as we forded them; and yet, up in the air as it falls, the stream seems all white foam, and yields gracefully to the wind. A broad belt of rainbow lay

¹ An onomatopy for a puff or blast of wind,—a recognition of that which strikes the eye at once: the blowing of the water by the wind.

right across it, seeming to pass into the substance of the fall, and wavering in the exquisite silver tissue of delicate vapor along its sides. Close beside us, as we passed on, ran the Merced, deep and swift, foaming often among the rocks, and yet showing its depth by the rich sea-green of its color.

The view from Inspiration Point brought back the image of Bunyan's Delectable Mountains. We looked up through the length of the valley, set like a jewel among these magnificent heights. A little grassy plain it seemed, excessively narrow, with a slender stream winding through it, and little trees dotted about. And yet we knew what trees these were, and recalled that we • had paced one of them, — a pine that had fallen near the hotel, — and found it nearly two hundred and twenty feet long. We were up above the valley walls now, and

looked along their tops, and saw the high country behind them, with its still ascending mountain peaks, and the swiftly falling valleys along which the waters ran that poured over into the gorge below.





V.

ON the next morning, May 11, we left the great valley before seven o'clock. At breakfast we had, among other things, pie. This article at breakfast was one of Mr. Emerson's weaknesses. A pie stood before him now. He offered to help somebody from it, who declined ; and then one or two others, who also declined ; and then Mr. — ; he too declined. "But Mr. —!" Mr. Emerson remonstrated, with humorous emphasis, thrusting the knife under a piece of the pie, and putting the entire weight of his character into his manner, — "but Mr. —, *what is pie for?*"

It was a beautiful, but hard ride of twenty-five or thirty miles to Galen Clarke's tavern, where we were to stop for the night, before making a *détour* on the next morning to see the great trees at Mariposa. We passed along through the silent pine-forests, up and down hills and across streams, talking, and occasionally shifting companions all the way. We lunched and had our nooning in the woods ; some lay on the brown pine-leaves and slept ; other some, sitting about or supine, listened in comfort while Mr. Emerson and one or two others were making out and repeating to each other something from Scott.

"How *can* Mr. Emerson," said one of the younger members of the party to me that day, "be so agreeable, all the time, without getting tired !" It was the *naïve* expression of what we all had felt. There was never a more agreeable travelling-

companion ; he was always accessible, cheerful, sympathetic, considerate, tolerant ; and there was always that same respectful interest in those with whom he talked, even the humblest, which raised them in their own estimation. One thing particularly impressed me, —the sense that he seemed to have of a certain great amplitude of time and leisure. It was the behavior of one who really *believed* in an immortal life, and had adjusted his conduct accordingly ; so that, beautiful and grand as the natural objects were, among which our journey lay, they were matched by the sweet elevation of character and the spiritual charm of our gracious friend. Years afterwards, on that memorable day of his funeral at Concord, I found that a sentence from his own essay on Immortality haunted my mind and kept repeating itself all the day long ; it seemed to point to the sources

of his power: "Meantime the true disciples saw through the letter the doctrine of eternity, which dissolved the poor corpse and Nature also, and gave grandeur to the passing hour."

It was pleasant, as we rode along, to hear him sound M. on his literary points. M. was not strong there; he preferred, for instance, Alice Cary to Byron. Upon these matters Mr. Emerson talked to him, on this day and the next, a good deal. He spoke of Bryant: "Bryant has a cold, clear eye, and writes in a manner very different from our other rhymers; he has a right to talk of trees and Nature." Byron he liked, and praised him warmly. "He valued his facility. His taste is good; now and then a word costs him more than it ought to, but it is seldom." M. stuck at this praise of Byron, and named a certain passage, objecting to some

word in it. "Yes," said Mr. Emerson, "I had not thought of that particular word. I read it for the first time, younger, perhaps, than you did. But he does n't delay you on that. There is a certain scenic and general luck about him." "Washington Allston he had never met, but he had seen him in the street, and again once in a carriage when the elder Richard Dana drove with Allston to his room at Cambridge, to see him about Mr. Dana's son, who was his pupil. At Coleridge's, in England, he had seen one of his pictures. Some one mentioned Allston's "Elijah" and its powerful expression of solitude and desert.¹ "Yes, he remembered that picture, and

¹ ". . . Allston's picture of Elijah in the Wilderness," says Mr. Lowell, irreverently, in his essay on Milton, "where a good deal of research at last enables us to guess at the prophet, absconded like a conundrum in the landscape, where the very ravens could scarce have found him out, except by divine commission."

liked it. The late Lord Derby and a friend of his, being in Boston years ago, had bought that and another picture of Allston; and lately they had been bought back." He was asked about Coleridge, but did not say much: "He looked like his portraits. He himself had called on him once; Coleridge seemed to have two or three things on his mind, — 'He is from Boston? well, Channing is from Boston, and Allston;' and he talked accordingly."

Clarke's was a plain country tavern on a fork of the Merced River, at about the same level as the Yosemite Valley. It was full, but we were somehow crowded in. In the morning we were off at eight o'clock for the Mariposa grove. Galen Clarke, our landlord, a solid, sensible man from New Hampshire, was the State guardian of the great trees, and now accompanied us, *honoris causâ*. It was a sunny and pleasant

ride. M. talked of the trees; and we grew learned, and were able to tell a sugar pine from a yellow pine, and to name the silver fir, and the "libocedrus," which is almost our arbor-vitæ and second cousin to the great sequoia.¹ By and by M.

¹ The "Big Tree" is popularly called in England the *Wellingtonia*. This is a mistake, and the error should be abandoned. The tree, having been first discovered at Calaveras in 1852, was mentioned in Californian newspapers, and then in the London "Athenæum" in July, 1853. Dr. Lindley published the first scientific description of it in an English journal in December, 1853; and supposing it to be a new genus, named it the *Wellingtonia*. The English botanist had the right to name it if it really was a new genus, for he had accidentally been able to publish the first account of it. Specimens sent to Dr. Torrey in New York, earlier than those sent to Dr. Lindley, had been lost on the way. But the genus was not a new one; the Californian red-wood was of the same genus, and that had been named and described by Endlicher, in Vienna, in 1847, as the *Sequoia*, — *Sequoia sempervirens*. This identity of genus was declared by Decaisne, in France, in June, 1854 (Endlicher died in

called out that he saw the sequoias. The general level was now about fifty-five hundred feet above the sea; the trees stood a little lower, in a hollow of the mountain. They were "big trees," to be sure; and yet at first they seemed not so very big. We grew curious, and looked about among them for a while; and soon began to discover what company we were in.

As we rode by a fallen trunk I happened suddenly to observe that the great log was higher than my head as I sat

1849), and the "Big Tree" was then named the *Sequoia gigantea*. This is now recognized among scientific men, the world over, as its correct designation. The name is that of a Cherokee Indian, Sequoia, who invented the Cherokee alphabet, "constructed with wonderful ingenuity," says Professor Whitney, and still in use. We must be grateful to the distinguished German botanist for a name so happily chosen. — I am indebted for these facts partly to Professor Whitney's excellent book, and partly to the kindness of my friend Professor Goodale.

on horseback. We climbed up on the trunk of another which had fallen, and it was nineteen feet in diameter. It was broken and wasted towards the top ; but I paced off two hundred and forty-nine feet along the stem, and found it still four feet in diameter. The trees were not gathered in any single group, but stood out here and there among the pines and firs and arbovitæ ; *these* were great creatures themselves, of six, eight, and even ten feet in diameter ; but they were dwarfed by their huge neighbors. It was not so much the height of the sequoias that surprised us, for these others ran up to more than two hundred feet in height, while the sequoias went hardly more than fifty feet higher. At the Calaveras grove, indeed, there was one sequoia of three hundred and twenty-five feet ; but here the astonishing thing was the size of the stems and

the branches. Relatively to the other trees, the trunk is much wider at the base, and tapers faster. The sequoias look enormously strong, are perfectly straight, and rise for a long distance smooth and unbranched. The Grizzly Giant (they name them, and put tin signs on them) branches first where it is near a hundred feet from the ground; and one of its lower boughs measures, so Mr. Clarke assured us, six feet and seven inches in diameter. This is the largest tree in the grove; it is of an irregular shape, and we found its diameter to be about twenty-nine feet one way, and thirty-one feet another.¹

¹ "The largest tree in the Lower Grove is the one known as the 'Grizzly Giant,' which is ninety-three feet seven inches in circumference at the ground, and sixty-four feet three inches at eleven feet above. Its two diameters at the base, as near as we could measure, were thirty and thirty-one feet. . . . Some of the branches of this tree are fully six feet in diameter, or

The bark easily catches fire, and most if not all of the old trees have suffered from devastation in this way. There was a fallen tree which had been burned in two and hollowed out by the fire. Through this hollow tube we rode without inconvenience, stooping only a little; if the fire had hollowed it a little more, we could have ridden with head high up, and room to spare. Then we rode through an ample hole, like a barn-door, in the trunk of an upright, living tree. At the Grizzly Giant we gathered in about the tree as close as we could, for the bulging at the root, to measure the circumference; and we found that our thirteen horses were not enough; it would need about six more to

as large as the trunks of the largest elms of the Connecticut Valley, of which Dr. Holmes has so pleasantly discoursed in the 'Atlantic Monthly' ("Yosemite Guide-Book," fourth edition, p. 182).

compass it. We got, however, our strongest impression of the size of the trees from a fragment of a fallen trunk that had been long burning and wasting away. Clarke said that it was the largest of all before the fire got into it the last time ; it began to burn in August, and kept on until the snow came. Now it was only a flattened piece of a trunk ; but enough of the great curve remained to indicate what it had been. Clarke measured the Forest Giant while we were there. It had lost its bark by fire ; but the diameter, two feet above the ground, was twenty-nine feet and six inches. The bark, he said, would have made the diameter about four feet more. This, it will be observed, was making the thickness of the bark two feet.

We passed along from one collection of the trees to another. Sometimes there were fifty of them near together ; and then,

again, they were scattered. There were some young ones ; "That is good !" one said to himself ; "they are not, then, a mere decaying thing of the past." These young ones were thrifty and perfectly proportioned : nothing could be more symmetrical, — so firmly planted, as they were, so straight, with so clean a stem and so shapely a foliage. The top in the perfect tree, as M. pointed out to us, is just a parabola, and not at all the peaked shape of the pine ; it is akin to the cedar and the juniper. Now and then, in the old trees, the top slopes off ungracefully and sharp, as if it had got up too far out of the hollow, and did not like the air ; this was the result of fire, M. thought, or something else that had destroyed the original top. Its Indian name, so we were told, is Wahwonah.

We sat down to lunch near a hut, and had a chance to rest and to look about us

more quietly. M. protested against our going away so soon: "It is," said he, "as if a photographer should remove his plate before the impression was fully made;" he begged us to stay there and camp with him for the night. After lunch Mr. Emerson, at Clarke's request, chose and named a tree. This had been done by one distinguished person and another, and a sign put up to commemorate it. Mr. Emerson's tree was not far from the hut; it was a vigorous and handsome one, although not remarkably large, measuring fifty feet in circumference at two and a half feet from the ground. He named it Samoset, after our Plymouth sachem; having at first doubted a little over Logan. He had greatly enjoyed the day. "The greatest wonder," said he, "is that we can see these trees and not wonder more."

We were off at about three o'clock, and

left M. standing in the forest alone ; he was to pass the night there in solitude, and to find his way back to the valley on foot. We had all become greatly interested in him, and hated to leave him. His name has since grown to be well known at the East, through his valuable articles in the magazines.





VI.

WE reached Clarke's in an hour, and at about five o'clock took again the stages which we had left, eight days before, at Hazel Green, on the other side of the valley; and in two hours we were at "White and Hatch's." This was a comfortable tavern; and a great fire of wood added to the cheer of a good dinner. It was cool on the veranda; and the landlord was induced to explore his house for an unoccupied room where a cigar might be allowed. We were led to an obscure, low, rather large room, with a couple of beds, and the nearly burned-out remains of a wood-fire upon a

large hearth. A single candle was lighted, and I sat down with Mr. Emerson, on the opposite side of the fireplace. It was dim and cosy, and we were very comfortable. "Is this not," said Mr. Emerson, slowly, and looking cautiously about, "the *conjugal* bedroom?" It seemed not unlikely. He talked long about various persons, and told a little tale of two of his early friends. It was like a poem, to hear him and to see him as he told the story in his musing, pausing way, in the dim light, — rather perhaps from what his face and his tones suggested, than from his words.

By and by H. came in and unguardedly announced that we were to be crowded for the night; that he was put into a room with only one small window, where there were five occupied beds; and that I was to share a little two-bedded room with Mr. Emerson. H. and I at once agreed that we would

have our beds on the platform, and sleep *al fresco*; but Mr. Emerson vehemently protested: "He would not allow it; why no, of course not; why should you not sleep in the room with me?" I insisted that I wished to sleep on the platform; and in truth I did greatly prefer it, for the fresh air. He would not believe it, and declared that he should go at once to the landlord and to the head of our party, and object. "Now Mr. H.," he said, "if you choose to do that, it's all very well; but our friend here has a wife and children, — he *must n't* do it." We held on, and finally only carried our point by showing him that we could go into the parlor if we wished. And so we younger men had our night—a perfectly comfortable one—on the platform, under a tree that grew up through it.

In the morning Mr. Emerson eyed me gravely, and asked, with a sceptical look,

about the night; and protested to our leader that the party "was dandling him all the way, and he should soon be only ready for a pap-spoon!" Before seven o'clock we were off again. I was no longer in the wagon with Mr. Emerson; two of the young people had gone forward to San Francisco, and it was best that I should take a seat in their coach. We passed down through a country like that which we had traversed in coming up; but we missed now the great mountains and their snowy tops, that before had drawn all our eyes and piqued our curiosity, as we drew near them. Now, instead of these, we perceived in the distance the vast sea-like stretch of the San Joaquin Valley, and far beyond, dimly, the Coast Range Mountains. Beyond Hornitos, we came down into the level of the plains. We had seen at the town of Mariposa, twelve miles out, the disused quartz-crushing establish-

ments in the tract which Fremont had owned, and great white dust-heaps of crushed rock. A good deal of placer-mining had been going on in those parts. It was interesting, but not pretty, at such places to see the rocks, the only insoluble things, lying about; while the surface-earth and the gold-bearing gravel had all been washed away in the sluices and had passed off, like Wycliffe's ashes, into the rivers. At Hornitos we dined, and rested for two hours; and then went on through the plains, crossing the Merced and the Tuolumne, and arriving after sunset at Roberts's again, having made fifty-seven miles that day.

We dined, as I said, at Hornitos,—a poor enough village. It was hot there, as befitted the name. After dinner came a delightful talk with Mr. Emerson. He spoke of Mirabeau, and something was said of Dumont's "Recollections." "Yes,"

he said, "that is a good book;" and he quoted Dumont's story about writing Mirabeau's speeches for him. "Mirabeau," said Mr. Emerson, "like Goethe, was a man who magnetized other people, and then considered that he had a right to all that they said."¹ The mention of Dumont suggested Romilly. He referred to Romilly's disgust at popular speaking; and went on to say something of the manner of speaking in the English parliament. "They will not endure eloquence there; what tells there is *first*, facts; and *second*, jesting."

¹ Mr. Emerson tells Dumont's story in the early part of the essay on Napoleon in "Representative Men." See also Dumont's "Recollections of Mirabeau," pp. 63-68, 87-90. "My work," said Goethe, once, after speaking of Mirabeau, "is that of an aggregation of beings taken from the whole of Nature,—it bears the name of Goethe. Such was Mirabeau: he had the genius . . . of observation; the genius of appropriation" (Mrs. Austin's "Characteristics of Goethe," p. 77).

He advised me to read the Life of Buxton. Buxton valued greatly this precise knowledge of facts: "Be sure of your facts," he said. Mr. Emerson wondered that the English liked so much Motley's histories,— "the style was so florid." Something was said of A. I asked who he was. "Why, he was that thrice-baptized, thrice-formulated minister at C., of whom B. [another clergyman] said, that 'he was, to be sure, a sort of a fool; and in the language of a soul still unreconciled to God, he was a damned fool.'"

We went on, and were drawn across the Merced in a ferry-boat hitched to a cable stretching from shore to shore, along which we were slid by the force of two Chinamen upon the boat laboriously turning at a crank. We looked our last at the river which had delighted us in the great valley,— alas! muddy now, and no longer

vapor, and foam, and liquid crystal. Later we crossed the Tuolumne, and drew up again at Roberts's. And again we sat on the platform in the evening, and "enjoyed the passing hour." Mr. Emerson talked to me of a certain writer: "The trouble with him is that you can't get him to make necessary changes and corrections." "I," said he, "and one or two others regard him as a poet; but we are the only ones that do."

Roberts's, considered as a tavern, was a place to leave. We went away early the next morning, and reached Stockton, on the railroad, by two o'clock in the afternoon; it was forty-five miles, mainly over the immense prairie of the San Joaquin Valley, where the stunted herbage and grain were burning up in the drought and sun; and they were to have no rain again until October. Here and there was some timber, as

at the crossing of the Stanislaus River. The little squirrels were still scampering like fury over the plain, and the small shad-belly owls stood about as before; and now and then a jackass-rabbit amused us again. We saw, too, a little gray hare, which they call a cotton-tail, from his white appendage: the other one has it dark, and his "jackass" ears, also, are tipped with black. We saw occasionally the mirage. It was incredible, as you looked at the trees and houses and hummocks of earth, and saw them surrounded with a smooth gray sheet of something that showed the reflection of these objects so plainly—it was incredible to be told that you were not really looking at water. To see, too, against the sky the figure of a man on horseback, on a treeless mound, in the wide plain ahead, was a wonder; he loomed like a giant. How would it be possible for a savage

looking at these things *not* to believe in magicians and devils and giants!

At a stopping-place I went back to the other wagon; and Mr. Emerson, as he spied me approaching, called out to me in distress: "These ladies are traducing the memory of that saint, H.!" They had, indeed, pitched upon some foible of the good man, and were indulging in levity; but Mr. Emerson stood up for him with an amused sturdiness; and afterwards at Stockton, at dinner, when the matter was referred to, he shook his head and laughed: "I consider myself the least of the lovers of H.; but you shocked me." At Stockton we walked about the town. Outside, on the plains, it had been burned and dry; but the town was full of greenness and of fresh and animating sights, and the windmills, like butterflies, were fluttering on every side. The dwelling-houses were generally small,

and of wood ; but each had its pump and windmill, and its yard or garden, that was kept green and bright from constant irrigation.

On the next day, May 15, we returned by rail to San Francisco, and were there at noon. We were to leave for the East in four days. These days Mr. Emerson preferred to pass in the city, — and indeed he was kept there in preparing for some lectures. He was curious to see the theatre of the roughs, — the lowest thing in the city, the “place,” he said, “where the miners went.” W. and I went with him. But all through the early hours of the evening the performance was flat and dreary ; and he was tired out, and went home early.

On Wednesday evening, May 17, he lectured upon Chivalry, — a disappointing address, which he had extemporized from certain fragments, — having failed to find

one of his best lectures that had been brought along, but lay hidden somewhere in his trunk. On Thursday, after sitting, at the request of some friends, for his photograph, he went on a beautiful drive, with Dr. Stebbins, along the San Bruno Road. In the evening he lectured at Oakland on "Hospitality." After his return that evening I found him in the supper-room of our hotel, bright and happy. He had seen at Oakland a relative, and an Englishman whom he had met in London, and Mr. Durant, the president of the University. The latter told him that he had heard his college part, fifty years before, at Commencement. "I tried," said Mr. Emerson, "to make him think that it was one of my brothers; but he insisted. It tries the credulity of the present generation to think of it!" I went with him to his room, and he wrote to Dr. Stebbins a

letter of introduction for a lady, then in some straits, whom he had formerly known at home ; she had met him here, and asked this favor : " I have seen her," he wrote, "at Sargent's and Bartol's, and such venerable places."

The next day, May 19, Mr. Emerson, with most of the party, began the return journey by going to Lake Tahoe, up in the Sierra Nevada. I lingered a day or two longer in San Francisco until the "Huron" was ready, and then joined the party, and we came rapidly home. There was no longer occasion to write letters, and I have no notes of this part of the journey.





MATTHEW ARNOLD'S LECTURE
ON EMERSON.

I REPRINT from the Boston "Daily Advertiser" of Dec. 11, 1883, a communication which was called out by Matthew Arnold's lecture on Emerson, first delivered, a little before that time, in Boston. The lecture has now been printed in "Macmillan's Magazine" for May, 1884.

The delivery of it here caused a great deal of unfavorable comment among those who cared particularly for Emerson and his writings. This was not altogether strange. The sentiment which Emerson inspired in his admirers went very deep,

even in those who had never seen him ; it was like personal affection for a near friend. If criticism was to be made, they could not well bear that it should come from any but themselves ; if others were to criticise acceptably, they must do it with singular tact. Certain things these persons *knew* ; their own experience and that of others attested the extraordinary power of Emerson's words, both in prose and verse,—his printed, as well as his spoken, words. It seemed, therefore, an intolerable thing that Mr. Arnold should rise up and say that Emerson was not in any department a great writer.

Moreover Mr. Arnold's remarks bore little sign of any anxious solicitude to commend them by the manner in which they were expressed ; indeed, in point of manner, there was much that seemed to these listeners strangely unfortunate. The

lecturer's criticisms began with prolonged depreciation ; his hearers grew depressed, and knew not where they were to come out. They had not, in listening, the valuable opportunity which the readers of Mr. Arnold's paper may now have, of running the eye forward and backward from time to time, and so of correcting a wrong impression, and assuring themselves of the author's precise meaning and his main drift. Emerson appeared to be set before them in the unfamiliar attitude of a mere literary man or philosophy-maker, and then disparaged by comparison with literary personages and constructors of philosophy with whom it seemed quite incongruous to compare him. "The infelicitous presentation of his subject," wrote one of Mr. Arnold's critics of the class whose sentiments I am now expressing, a very able and distinguished man, "the mal-arrangement of his

thoughts concerning it, gives the impression of a verdict less favorable than the author intended. By arranging his negatives in the front of his lecture he preoccupies the minds of his hearers with the feeling of an adverse judgment which subsequent encomiums do not quite neutralize." And he added: "His proposed abatements of literary merit in our countryman are less objectionable than the grounds on which they are based." These unacceptable things, also, were said with a displeasing assurance, as if the questions were closed, and the final judgment of mankind had now been uttered; and this, as a mere point of manner, troubled many. Add to this the fact that there were a few remarks—such as the story of the Americans who found Emerson "too greeny for them"—which disturbed by their triviality and questionable taste, and which, in truth, were not well in keeping

with that mood of one "communing with Time and Nature about the productions of this rare and beautiful spirit," of which Mr. Arnold had so finely spoken.

When at length the lecturer turned, and began to praise, some who were familiar with Emerson's writings seemed to perceive indications that the commendation came from a too limited knowledge and apprehension of these writings, and from a remembered rather than a living and still operative impression of their power. And the persons whose impressions I am stating pointed to the effect of the lecture upon hearers who, for one reason or another, had never been reached by Emerson's influence; such people would occasionally be heard saying, as they came away from the lecture: "Well, I am glad to hear that! I never *did* think much of Emerson." There seemed reason, then, in the complaint, that

the intended emphasis of the lecture, as a lecture, as something to be listened to, had somehow got misplaced, and that the speaker's commendation had not really succeeded in keeping its head above the flood of his dispraise.

I have spoken of the feeling excited by Mr. Arnold's lecture among many of the lovers of Emerson. Few of them, I think, were able to accept it as wholly satisfactory. But yet many, while sympathizing more or less fully with the feelings and opinions which I have indicated, still perceived in Mr. Arnold's lecture an essay which, although not by any means one of his best, was yet not unworthy of him ; a fine and beautiful essay, the best public attempt yet made towards a calm and just estimate of our admired and beloved, yet often puzzling author, and one likely on both sides of the water to spread his influence. They

recognized the genuineness of Mr. Arnold's admiration for Emerson, the correctness of his opinion as to the sort of greatness that belonged to him, and the general justness of his discriminations ; and they were not to be set back by certain considerable defects in the details, and also in the substance, of his treatment.

The letter which follows was written from the point of view last indicated. The purpose of it did not call for any attempt at a full estimate of Emerson's genius. I should not think of reprinting it now if it were not that some things are emphasized in it which appear to me important for a correct understanding of his writings. I am the rather moved to reprint it because on reading Mr. Arnold's paper, I cannot think that he has adequately recognized the considerations to which I allude. Perhaps Mr. Arnold's comparison of Emerson

to Marcus Aurelius marks, as well as anything which could be cited, the serious defect in question. Marcus Aurelius was not a man *possessed*: Emerson was. There is in Emerson an inflaming religious quality which searches the soul of his reader with singular power; his morals are not merely morals, they are morals on fire.

[From the Boston Daily Advertiser of December 11, 1883.]

To the Editors of the Boston Daily Advertiser :

WILL you permit me, as one who has for many years read and admired Emerson, to express a hearty dissent from your article upon the subject of Mr. Arnold's lecture? That lecture appeared to me to be a thoughtful, sincere, and valuable effort at a just, critical estimate of our

great man. There are few writers in the English language with anything like the qualifications which Mr. Arnold brings to such a task. I count it much that so subtle a critic, an Englishman, standing to us like posterity, — shedding all enthusiasms, and insisting, as he says, upon “judging Emerson only by the highest standards,” and, even so, leaning to the strictest estimate, — has come out where he has.

Of course literature, mere literature, takes account of form as well as matter. Judged as literature, the critic tells us that neither Mr. Emerson’s prose nor verse can rank with the great things of the world. He adds that, as a maker of philosophy, Emerson cannot be classed with the great philosophers of the world. But when this has been said he has given up “to envious Time as much of Emerson as he can ever expect to obtain.” The essays are the

most important prose works of the century in the English language. "You cannot prize him too much, nor heed him too diligently."

Such is the estimate. In its main lines it seems to me just. We admirers of Mr. Emerson are quite too apt to forget how hard it is for the mass of readers to get at him, or to see why people should much like his verse, or should set his prose as high as they do. Arnold will help them to get at him, and to see why; and in doing this he will do for them, and for Emerson also, an incalculable benefit. It is not as philosophy, in any ordinary sense of the term, and it is not as mere literature, that Emerson is so highly valued; it is on other grounds.

What was it that Emerson set himself to do? He left the pulpit, not because he no longer wished to preach, but because

he was not willing to preach under the limitations of that place. He continued all his life to be a preacher, a proclaimer of spiritual truth, a teacher of the moral law. He was flooded and full to overflowing all through his life with a sense of the presence, the omnipresence, and the instant operation of what he called "the over-soul." His apprehension and acceptance of this was no merely intellectual matter; it was something that penetrated into the substance of his being, and moved him like a vital force; it was this, with its related beliefs, that gave such power to his speech and such charm to his character, as of one who had already entered upon the immortal life; so that those who knew him intimately seemed to perceive what it was that the phrase of Scripture meant when it said of the Almighty that he "inhabited eternity." The truth that he saw,

the powerful impulse that he felt, the inflaming inspiration that moved him, were not the sort of things that the man of letters ordinarily has to handle; and they induced methods very different from the common. These things were difficult to grasp; only to be reached in rare moments; not to be adequately shadowed forth, unless when the mood was on. These high and delicate matters were to be set down when he saw them and as he saw them; they must be communicated, if indeed he might hope to communicate them, by picture, by symbol, by some far-darting gleam of imaginative phrase. He wrote almost always, let it be noticed, what was to be read by himself to public audiences; and his oracular words had the aid of that thrilling voice, of those most meaning hints of emphasis and pause and accent, of that noble face and demeanor, which are so well re-

membered. / So long as he could make, to use his own phrase, "a clean transcript of his own mind;" so long as he could put his thought into compact, powerful, imaginative utterance, — he would not imperil the freshness and truth of it by any effort at a literary setting, by elaborating the approaches to it, or attending to its due evolution, or seeking to bring his reader safely and gently back again to earth.

Of his poems, too, the same sort of thing is to be said. Are we to suppose that Mr. Emerson devoted himself to the *art* of verse, as the great writers in that kind have done? When Mr. Arnold speaks of the "great poets," he is thinking doubtless of those who have sought to add the charm of perfect form to what they had to say. It was but seldom that Mr. Emerson aimed at this. He used verse not as the

literary artists use it, seeking to polish and refine to the utmost the medium of expression which they have chosen. Mainly he threw himself into the effort to reach an *adequate* expression of his thought. We seem to see his reason for choosing to speak in verse when we find him saying that "Rhyme, being a kind of music, shares this advantage with music, that it has a privilege of speaking truth which all Philistia is unable to challenge. . . . With the first note of the flute or horn, or the first strain of a song, we quit the world of common sense, and launch on the sea of ideas and emotions ; we pour contempt on the prose you so magnify: yet the sturdiest Philistine is silent. The like allowance is the prescriptive right of poetry. You shall not speak ideal truth in prose uncontradicted ; you may in verse." Beautiful, strong, great passages, and several noble

poems did, indeed, come out of this. If one looks at the matter which it was sought to express, it is of the greatest, and often is enough of itself to glorify the halting lines. But in the main, as Mr. Emerson did not seek, so he has not attained, that supreme excellence of great poetry where sense and sound are married in an immortal harmony.

Again, Mr. Arnold says that Emerson "is not a great philosophy-maker." This is not saying anything that should surprise one. I am rather surprised that it should be thought necessary to say it at all. "Strictly speaking," says Mr. G. W. Cooke, in his account of Emerson, "Emerson is not a philosopher." That is true enough; he was no otherwise a philosopher than as every great and wise moralist and spiritual teacher is to be deemed a philosopher. And I do not think that Mr. Arnold

is right in saying that he "is the propounder of a philosophy" at all. Whoever finds philosophy in Mr. Emerson must construct it for himself; he propounded none.

Well, then, if all this be true, why complain so much of Mr. Arnold? If it be said that his essay has defects and infelicities both in substance and in form, that may be conceded. He does not mark at all plainly, in making his comparisons, any apprehension of the difference between the aim and the subject-matter of such a man as Addison or Gray on the one hand, and Emerson on the other; or any perception on his part of a certain incongruity in the comparison of these names. Difference of subject-matter and of aim leads, of course, to different methods; if Emerson is to be estimated as mere literature, it seems a fair suggestion that he should

be weighed with men of like subject and aim.

It may be conceded also that Mr. Arnold has not signified any due appreciation of Mr. Emerson's very extraordinary powers of expression. He was a great master in this art; no one, perhaps, ever saw more deeply into the nature and the secret of language than he, or knew how to use it more powerfully. It is only as touching the elaboration of continuous literary workmanship that it is to be conceded that Emerson is not a great writer; this defect it is that Mr. Arnold indicates in saying that his style has not "the requisite wholeness of good tissue."

Finally, I think it may be confessed that Mr. Arnold did not, either by what he said or what he quoted, indicate as plainly as he might why it is that Emerson is to be placed so high. He leaves on one the

impression of speaking from a *funded* enthusiasm, so to speak, rather than from a fresh and present apprehension of what he is saying. To "return upon" a writer who has powerfully affected one is like returning upon one's own higher moods ; it is a thing not to be done merely when one wills to do it, not to be done on every day or in every condition.

But allowing all this, shall one wait till he can assent to all that another says before he admires and applauds? After all allowances, it remains true that Mr. Arnold has given us, as I said, a criticism of our great man which, although gravely defective and inadequate, is in its main lines sound and good. Mr. Emerson was not a great literary artist, either in prose or verse; he was not a great maker of philosophy; he was not a philosopher at all, in any just sense of that word: but he was

a seer, a prophet, a great recorder of spiritual truth, a great teacher and "friend and helper of those who would live in the spirit," — comparable, indeed, only with the greatest names.

J. B. T.

CAMBRIDGE, Dec. 10, 1883.

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